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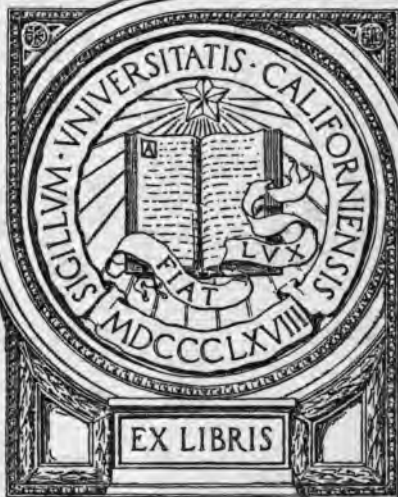
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# Songs of the Out of Door West

by

Katherine Elsepth Oliver

# 985



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**By KATHERINE ELSPETH OLIVER**

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**THE PRINTERY**

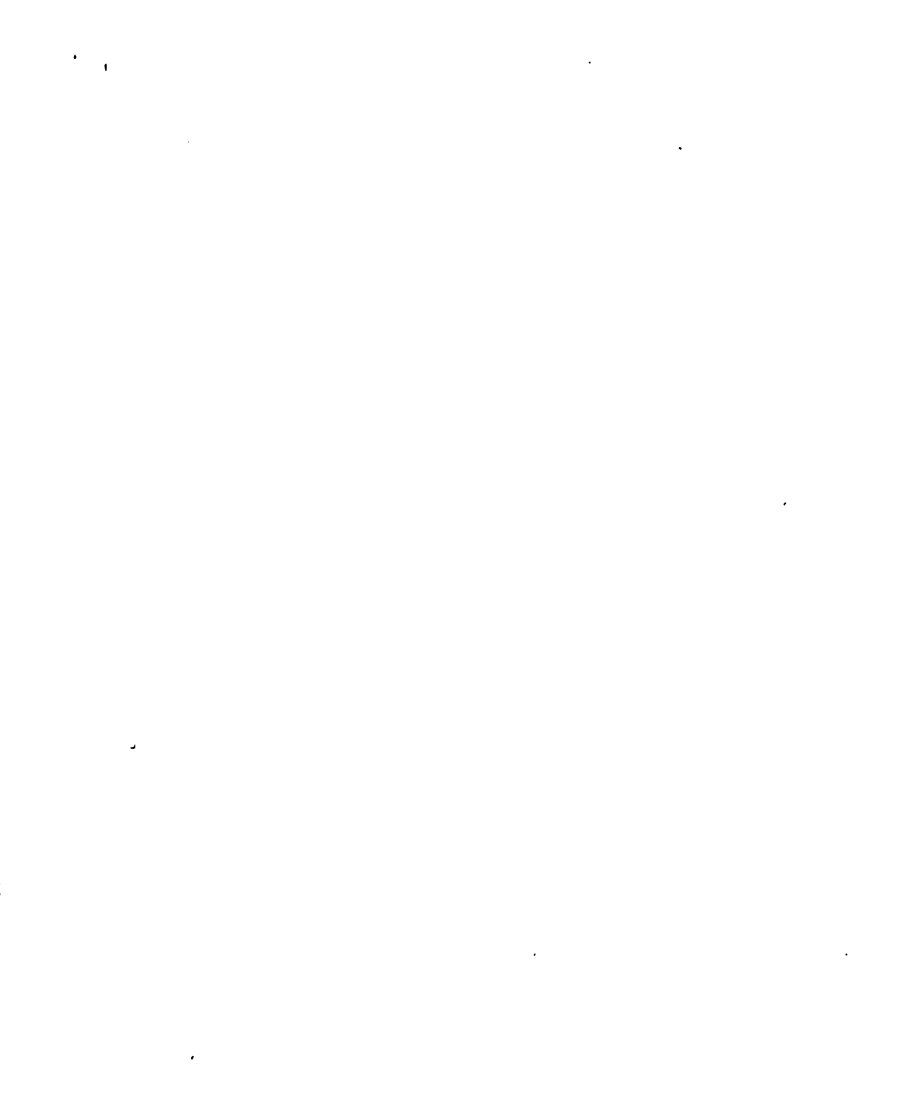
**FULLERTON, CALIFORNIA**



Class of 1887

**AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED  
TO MY SISTERS**

<sup>7</sup>  
**840647**



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## LIVING

Here's what I love!

The clean sky above  
And the clean wide air,  
The mounting plain,  
The sweeping rain—  
The wind in my hair!

To ride and ride,

Where the land spreads wide  
To the darkening hills;  
In a splendid race  
To the open place  
And the life that fills.

To ride and rest

On the hill's high crest  
Under open sky;  
And to sleep without fear  
Where the stars are near,  
And God close by.



70 1000  
1000 1000

## **SOUTHLAND SPRING**

Sun and a bit o' rain—  
And a wooing breeze from out  
The yellow west.

Mornings of golden mist  
And a meadow-lark singing, a-wing,  
Above his nest.

Sun and a bit o' rain—  
One starry night, and warm,  
The earth thrills—pregnant—labors  
An hour and Spring  
Is born.

## HOMESICK

I know out there the day is breaking on the hills,  
And all the wide and waiting distance thrills  
One hushed moment at the coming of the dawn.

I know the wine of morning that you quaff—  
Prick of wind, the sheen of sun on rock.  
The laugh of radiant day begun.

I know how there the warm and flushing noons  
Soothe the great land to languor till she swoons  
To deep and sudden slumber in the sun.

I know how the shy stars will light your way  
To that high crest you seek at close of day;  
I know how calm your slumber as you lie  
Under the vast white silence of the sky.

I know—and here, where the great city wakes  
From fretted sleep, and hideous clamor takes,  
Where harsh walls herd the crowds that harried go,  
I'm longing for the wide land that I know—  
The land that holds just you and God.

## THE EVANGEL

I hear him singing now  
On his bright bough,  
Always the highest—ever the nighest  
To the wide sky.

Herald of joy!  
No mocking minstrel he,  
To the high founts his spirit mounts  
And takes its glee.

Hear, from his rapturous  
Throat, a thousand crystal notes  
To word his ecstasy.  
See how his fancy dreams,  
A thousand varied themes  
To voice his rhapsody.

And lo! As though  
Too frail the instrument  
His praises to indite  
His passion flings him  
Skyward, like some  
Ecstatic neophyte.

## *The Evangel*

Hark! how he croons,  
Through dreaming noons,  
His soul's content—  
He wakes the night  
With his delight—  
His zest unspent.

I hear him singing  
Now on his high bough—  
Evangel Bird!  
I hear him singing now  
His rapturous Word:

" 'Tis folly to be sad—  
'Tis wisdom to be glad—  
Be glad! Be glad!  
'Tis wisdom to  
Be glad!"

## THE NORTHER

The southwest norther is not a blizzard but a sand-storm. Just before and after, the air is inordinately clear and the sky brilliant with leaf and rock and sand a-gleam. These storms are colloquially called "electric" storms for during them the atmosphere seems charged—the hair of men and beasts crackles when brushed and—borrowing again the colloquial—the inhabitants complain of feeling "jumpy."

---

Hark! the norther's on hand—  
She's leaped on the land from out of the pass;  
From the desert, stark, where the coyotes bark,  
She sprang from the sand—with a whistle she sprang—  
And a grewsome dance she began.

In her skirts she picked up the pebbles, and clicked  
In her fingers the bones of beast and man  
That bleach on the sand; and she whirled and whirled  
And laughed and twirled, till the coyote skulked  
Red-eyed to his hole, and she cried: "Ah, my Soul—  
Farewell!" And she flew, with her skirts full of sand.

The green land she hates—  
Through the canyon gates, with a shriek, she leaps;  
And the land she shakes, and the trees she breaks,  
And the man she smites, and the beast she bites—  
And the night, it stares, wide-awake, in fright.

## *The Norther*

Where the scared flowers hide, soft, softly she'll glide;  
"Sweets, a kiss," she mocks low—then a dry, dry breath  
She will blow. She's mad for a drink—  
She stoops at the brink of each spring she goes by—  
She sucks the fields dry.

I met her last night—  
She'd come through the Pass, to smite the green grass;  
And her teeth with grit were sharp—and she bit;  
I saw her red eye, and she whispered, "Good-bye,"  
And was gone, riding high, through the sky.

## TO A "HORNY" TOAD

Little horny toad  
Blinking in the sun—your day  
Begun with cheer (a fine, fat bug—  
May-hap, a gnat), and comfort of  
Warm sand 'gainst wee soft  
Belly pressed—how  
Strangely you  
Are dressed!

How strangely you  
Are dressed—in coat of mail  
From crown to tail—and proudly  
Crested head! Odd little  
Horny toad—why thus  
Accoutred?

Why thus accoutred,  
Wee little knight? What dread  
Lives in this wide place of friendly  
Folk—what terror rides in the high  
Cloud aisles—what terror  
Strides 'cross the desert waste  
Peopled with a gentle race—  
Of pleasant folk?

## To a "Horny" Toad

Only the gray hawk  
Sailing high—only the sad coyote—  
Stark and fearful and looking back,  
Back—ever; only the Jack—  
The lean, gray Jack—  
Noiseless and light—only the  
Lark with her instant song—  
A moment begun, a moment  
Done; the Swift with  
His weird curiosity—  
Only a shadow—  
Only a tree.

And you, in your  
Brave little armor arrayed—  
I feel your tiny heart beating—afraid—  
'Gainst my palm—and your little hand like  
A baby's, grip my fingers—No—  
I won't let you slip!  
And all your puny wrath can do is  
To open your toothless mouth and "Who-o-o"  
A gusty breath—There, see! I've put  
You back in your "comfy" sand—  
Little scared knight of a  
Dragonless land.



## THE RETURN

**Spring! Time of the New!**

Day of the fragrant things that bud and bloom,  
Day of the tender things that bloom and die;  
Time of the hope of little nestling things,  
The hope and fear for little nestling things beneath  
warm breasts.

Time of the songs that thread the waking night—  
That thread the night with heartache and delight;  
Hour of strong wings that mount up to the sun;  
Of fragile wings that fail beneath the sun—

**Spring! Time of the New!**

**Spring! Time of the New, the old, old New!**

Whether the blossoms of this hour's birth,  
Or those young wings that glance above the grass,  
Or the sweet fulsome breath of sunnied earth, or rap-  
turous lark!

All, all—the Presence and the Promise—all are those  
Sweet former things we knew whose latter pain  
The kind year eased awhile till thou didst wake the  
hurt.

**Spring! Time of the New!**

## THE BOULEVARDS

I love the boulevards—  
The ink-purple boulevards sounding  
All day with sibilant wheels.

I have no rich coach  
Accoutred to taste and purring  
Proudly. I ride with the  
Plain folks, in the stages.  
I like it.

## COLOR

I like the color  
And stir at the stage stations—  
I like to watch the crowds,  
Waiting—sitting and  
Waiting:

Shoppers for the city,  
High school girls and boys,  
Workmen with their kits—a clerk—  
An office girl—a student with nose in book;  
Two or three squat señoras; and travelling  
Men and tourists; a little family  
With rollicking kiddies, and  
Baskets of lunch, bound  
For the beach.

## *The Boulevards*

### HEROES

I love to see the stages  
Swagger in, like doughty champions  
Puffing and blowing—like thoroughbreds  
After the race—sides heaving.

There is the thrill and prick  
Of former days . . . the curling whip  
Above the foaming four-in-hand—flourish of horn  
The salvos as the coach comes in. . .  
. . . The drivers—heroes of wheel and clutch—  
Young swash-bucklers in puttees! They swing  
With swagger to the wheel the prettiest girl  
Beside. Soft this—to push a "Hack"  
Along the boulevards at "thirty-five,"  
Who late were dodging shell-holes  
In a motor lorrie, with  
"Dumdums" going over.

### THE START

We sit tight packed—  
The doors are slammed—the crash  
Of clutch, the stutter and the lunge  
And we are off, adventuring upon  
The humming highway!

### THE ROAD

The wind drives wet  
Through flapping curtains—  
We swath our coats about us—turn collars up  
And profiles to our mates. Eyes on the running road—  
We are as close as man and man, yet are alone—  
The motor taking up his song—each one alone,  
Alone, and riding free and furious  
Into the blur.

## *The Boulevards*

### FOG

Wiped out is the day  
Of sound and color—only the  
Burnished band of the road, running ever  
To meet us—running ever under the wheels, like  
A polished belt—like a gray satin ribbon  
Winding and winding on a spool.  
Gray ghosts are at hand, shrouded  
And motionless, gray ghost shapes. We fly  
Past them like a scared thing, and the gray is torn  
Now and again by thundering shapes—bearing upon  
Us with swirl and shriek—shapes, fleeing,  
Like ourselves, from the roadside ghosts.  
Then again—silence and the throb of  
The motor, like a faithful heart—  
The sibilant wheels and the  
Flap of the curtains  
In the wind.  
Our cheeks are cold  
And wet, but our hearts are warm  
And glad—glad for the loneliness—for  
The sunless distance, the silence  
And the race.

## *The Boulevards*

### THE SUN

Then the fog is torn,  
Torn by the slender spires  
Of the wayside eucalypti—caught like  
A silken petticoat, on a snag—and here  
Is a rift of blue—yonder, a green field showing,  
And, like a lovely woman masquerading, the Day  
Drops her nun's garb and runs  
Laughing, to meet us.

And now we sing along  
Roads purple—avocado purple—  
Along roads blue—the deep blue of indigo;  
We flash past rows of orange trees—  
The singing tires scatter the scarlet  
Pepper berries. The air flashed  
Back by the speeding wheels is  
A bouquet of sweets;  
A thousand sweets! Honey of orange  
Blossoms, nectar of wild bloom,  
Of rose hedges a-gleam with  
Mist beads; fragrance of  
Emerald alfalfa and  
The new earth behind  
The morning plow.

## *The Boulevards*

### THE DAY

The day is long  
With thoughts—dual thoughts;  
The speed—the wind—our aerated bodies—  
Something has accomplished separation.  
We are removed—transplanted to  
The realm of spirit—the  
Fourth Dimension—  
Maybe

The day is long  
With thoughts: Thoughts of  
That we see with our eyes and  
That our hearts see.  
Thoughts about that home  
Yonder on that green slope, and another  
We know; thoughts about that  
Man plowing his field and  
Another familiar  
And dear, pottering about  
His garden. Thoughts of the little  
Girl lifting smiling face to us  
From the roadside and  
Another who will  
Smile no more  
For us—here.

## *The Boulevards*

### THE NIGHT

So we ride the boulevards—  
The purple boulevards—from dripping  
Morning to burnished sunset. And we crash  
Through the dark like a racing chariot—  
Our headlight cuts the night like  
A sword through a velvet curtain—  
Like a brandished sword  
Through a curtain of  
Scented velvet.

We reel down the slope  
And roar up the hill toward  
A flare in the sky, and behold!  
The City, like a golden  
Idol—jewel-girt and  
Dripping light.

## YOU

Saw a bit of sky, bright blue,  
Through the clouds yesterday—thought of You.  
Just a glint of clean, clear sky,  
Shining up there, sweet and high,  
Pure and true, like the eyes  
Of You.

Saw a little, tender dove  
Yesterday, in the sky—thought of You, dear Love.  
With its tiny might, alone,  
Beating 'gainst the storm—wind-blown,  
Brave, unspent, unspoiled—  
Little wilful, val'rous dove,  
Like you, Love.

Saw a little saucy new  
Red rose, yesterday—thought of You.  
Tip-toe, tempting: "Pluck me, Sir, if you dare!"  
So I reached and plucked her, though I swear  
Well she pricked. But I have her here  
On my breast today—tender, fragrant, rare—  
Like you, Dear.



## TWO DAYS

The day broke bellowing  
On the land, and from the dawn  
To candle-light, each hour  
Piled up disaster.

\* \* \* At night the red sun  
Skulked a-down the sky as one  
Who looks not back upon  
His work. \* \* \*

\* \* \* The ghastly twilight  
Fell on homes where women hugged their babes  
And moaned, and staring men who fought  
And failed, lifted on high their  
Empty hands. \* \* \*

\* \* \* From out the ruin's  
Midst: "There is no God!"  
They cry.

A morning broke  
In fairest calm, and beauty  
Walked abroad—the land all glad  
With bounty and the songs  
Of men. \* \* \*

\* \* \* At eve the great sun  
Moved unto his rest as one who leaves  
Behind benign remembrances  
And generous deeds. \* \* \*

\* \* \* The twilight fell  
On peaceful homes where rested men  
From toil; where children played  
And women softly sang. \* \* \*

\* \* \* So kind a day!"  
The crooning mother sighs—  
"God must be nigh!"

## THEIR SPRINGS

By Katherine Elspeth Oliver

Every Spring  
We are quickened—we who  
Have the smallest gift of song.  
It isn't just the jibe of the jokesmiths—  
Quickened, like the teeming earth—  
Like the eager seed, hastening  
To put forth after  
Its kind. \* \* \*  
\* \* \* Spring is a great  
Locksmith. He has the key that fits  
The rusty lock of the imagination:  
Thoughts flow like new-loosed  
Brooks; fancy takes wing  
Like the lark—it gushes  
Like new sap.

For each of us  
Has known his Spring!  
Faber, the poet—Emery—  
The essayist with a "rep" and everything  
Coming his way; West, the class "vale"  
Making his pile at stocks, who even  
Yet turns out a surreptitious line  
On his secretary's typewriter  
With that Personage gone;  
Brown, the T. B.  
In his garret, tapping  
Out an accompaniment to his  
Cough on his second-hand Corona—  
The only sign of the season, the crimson  
Token that spells the M. D.'s  
Prophecy: \* \* \*  
\* \* \* "by Spring."

## *Their Springs*

All of us have  
Known Spring—and the gush  
Of the heart meeting the surge of  
Growing things; the ravishment of Spring  
Incense; the something—like tears—when the  
Eyes meet the vision of a field,  
Full-panoplied with  
Spring bloom. \* \* \*  
\* \* \* We have all known  
Spring; its majesty and madness—  
Its worship and its loves.  
And that ineffable urge of the  
Quickened spirit toward  
Its Heaven.

---

## IN THE PARK

Above, the great trees stand in mighty calm  
And o'er the grass the sunshine spreads its balm;  
Beneath droop burdened souls that know no rest,  
And by despairing feet the grass is pressed.

But though in vain their calm is spread for these—  
Still watch they on. How patient are the trees!  
And though o'er it unheeding feet may pass—  
Still smiles it on. How patient is the grass!  
\* \* \* \* \*

Methinks God's patience waiteth in the trees;  
Methinks God's mercy bides in sunny leas.

## THE CONQUEROR

Ho, thou!

Who cometh there, across the snow?

Stay—halt, and give the word! Knowest not

That none may pass this way—with millions spilling blood—

Who hath no sign, nor token of command? Who art thou—

What thy name—who servest? Speak!

Look you, comrade—and he is gone!

He moves in majesty across the bloodied snow,

Unstayed by sword—nay—what is this? The blade

Falls broken to the ground—and oh, his eyes!

Sawest thou, that instant, as they turned

With look that pierced the heart—

August and terrible!

And in his breast he bears

A sleeping child, and that which slipped

Past, as we stood, amazed, and clingeth to

The hem of him—it is a woman!

Look ye—what sight is this? The dying raise

Them as he goes and lift their wounds

To him and cry—Hark! What cry they?

“Hail, Prince of Peace—

Hail Thou and hear!”

## *The Conqueror*

"Thou! Prince of Peace—  
Come to thy festival of love and cheer—  
What welcome Thine? Razed temples—smoldering hearths  
And harried droves of homeless and behind—  
The cannon's night, and fields of staring dead.  
Come to thy festival, oh Prince, across  
The plains of blood—and art forgot—rejected? Nay!  
By these wounds that cry to Thee! By dead men's  
Eyes that stare at thee—Nay!  
By these barren wombs that wail to Thee—  
And that despair that looks  
From old men's eyes!"

Ha—look! With tenderness he lays  
The child within his mother's arms and turns  
To speak: "Aye, 'Prince of Peace' am I, though scarce  
My mother's arms received me ere the threat  
Of jealous Throne had snatched me from  
My gentle bed to hurried flight. My kinsman—John—  
And messenger, was slain, by boast  
Of bestial Prince—"Thou art not Caesar's  
Friend," the taunt, that Pilate's manhood slew  
And sent me to the cross.

"Aye, 'Prince of Peace'—  
I sealed my lips and, wordless, bore  
The insults of the Roman guard. The thorny crown  
I wore—disdained to yield the homage of a moan.  
One of the royal band it was who lent  
The final thrust of earthly insolence with sword  
Within my tortured side. And in my name  
Millions have died—by wounds—by cross—and fire—  
At hand of throned tyrants.

## *The Conqueror*

Have forgot? Ah no! Yet once again—  
Today—I come: The Prince of Peace!"  
See—he hath flung aside his humble robes—  
He stands against the blood red arch of rising day—  
A warrior, accoutered for the fight—more terrible  
Than battery of guns, his eyes more piercing  
Than the eyes of flying men—his arm invincible!  
"On—Carry on!"  
Today the Prince of Peace commands—  
On the proud, self-reared chiefs of men,  
He maketh war for ever more—  
On—carry on!

The sainted dead a cloud of witnesses—  
The loosed souls of thy brothers—slain—encompass ye!  
The pain of all who wander, weep and die, today,  
At cursed hand of Kings, cry unto thee  
The wrongs of all the weary years call to ye—  
I—the long suffering one—the Prince of Peace,  
In name of God and Peace, command ye—  
Carry on!

## THE MEN COME BACK FROM HELL

These are the men  
Come back from hell. Once they were  
Like ourselves—everyday folk at their  
Tasks: one was a clerk, another an engineer;  
One made shoes for a living. They were all  
Busy men, in a land of peace. Then the  
Call came: a job overseas ridding  
The world of bandits—  
And they went.

They went where the  
Good world—the kind, familiar world,  
Yielding harvests and happiness—security  
And pleasant homes, had turned daft, and gaped  
With fearful wounds; where the smitten ground leaped  
Skyward, and the earth—blood sickened—belched  
The dead from out their hasty graves.  
Where quiet meadows shrieked with  
Winged death—where forests  
Smoked and the sowed field  
Brought forth corpses.

## *The Men Come Back From Hell*

Where the dwellers  
Of the land were driven forth  
Like cattle by murderous and lustful hands—  
The old—bewildered, fainting—children smitten—  
Women mad, and cursing the gift of birth. The world—  
The safe, glad world writhing in horror—  
Rolled in blood: These are the men  
Come back from hell.

These are the men  
Come back from Hell—their banners  
With them; they whose deeds the world will  
Speak unto all ages: war scarred—battle bitten—  
Wound smitten—Greet them with salvos and tears.  
Tears—thanksgiving and awe—they are the  
Miracle of God and the invincible  
Arm: *The men come back  
From Hell!*



## **WE HAVE KEPT FAITH**

**We have kept faith—**

**Oh, ye who lie in Flanders field today—**

**We have kept faith with thee. That sacred trust**

**Pledged by the warm, young blood of you who loved**

**Life, as do we—the sweet, wide air, sun and the crimson**

**Poppies—all things fair—we have kept pledge**

**With you who fell 'mong Flanders flowers.**

**We have kept faith with you—**

**Dost hear, today, dear dead—dear dead?**

**Above thy head the sky is fair again, and clean,**

**From the sweet noon the peace thou broughtest so soon**

**Hath swept the cannon's night away—the larks have sought**

**Again their nests in the low grass—'long the old track**

**The herds graze slowly back—and see! On rebuilt**

**Hearths the fires kindled are, and there is**

**Home once more, dear dead—sweet dead—**

**Because you lie where Flanders' poppies blow.**

**We have kept faith with you—ye whom**

**We shall not greet tomorrow when the ships**

**Come home. The proud, unsullied flag—your flag—**

**Will know the untrammelled air, and fair with banners**

**Will be the streets your eager feet have pressed**

**The while ago—and we shall miss you there. Ah! Yes—**

**When we make glad because of the great gift**

**You bought with price of your low bed**

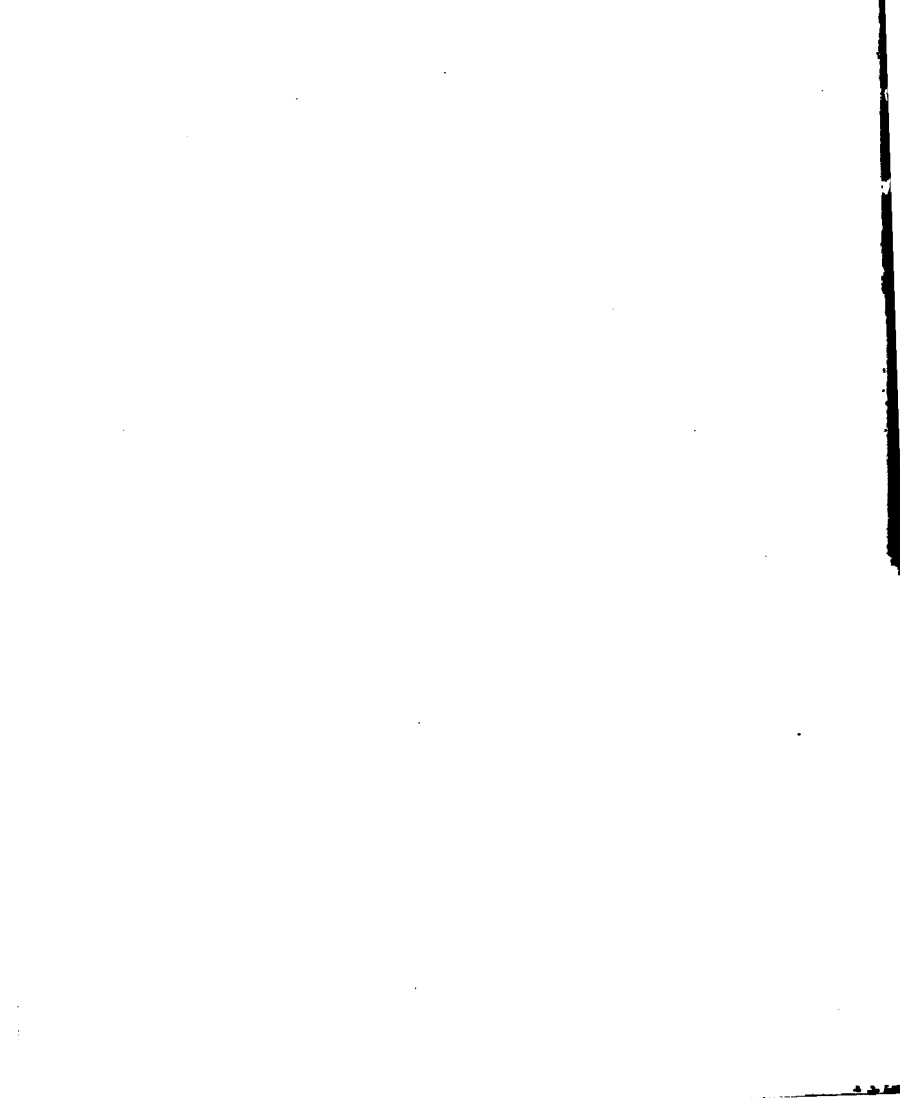
**'Mong Flanders poppies spread**

## *We Have Kept Faith*

Gift of free life, free air—bread  
Earned by free men and for their souls—  
Lease from the curse of kings, we have kept faith—  
That boon, your unselfed passion sought for men and bought  
At price so dear—we have held fast and sealed to us  
By iron terms of conquerors. For fruitful fields  
Laid waste, and peaceful homes that held  
The lives of peaceful men—for churches  
Razed, and all the ways of industry  
And honest life ravished by bandits—price  
In full, or face again the flaring guns!

Vengeance for those—the slain  
By murderers' hands—those lain along  
The bone-strewn track of desert—for the  
Unnamed crimes against the white, protesting souls  
Of maidens—deaths of the old, and fiendish crimes  
'Gainst babes—forgot no debt your outraged eyes  
Beheld, that steeled your soul and arm—made life  
A guilty thing while such outrages lived,  
And death, a friend, so thou couldst bring  
To end such villainies.

Fear not! The victors' terms have read  
To the whipped hordes the terror writ by thundering  
Guns of the avenging nations. No plea for lenience,  
No weak forgetting shall pardon their offense,  
Toward God and man—treachery and death  
Have kissed each other—the world is safe, oh, brothers  
Of the white soul and mighty arm! Thou canst rest—  
Now—a little while where poppies blow,  
Till God shall wake thee—in thy slumbers  
Thou shalt know we have kept faith with thee.





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